



MMEA on Racism and Violence

Statement and Actions We Will Take

The Minnesota Music Educators Association (MMEA) stands with our community, our state, our nation, and our world as we mourn the brutal police murder of George Floyd. It is time to take meaningful steps to put an end to systemic racism and violence against people of color and MMEA is committed as an organization to lend its voice and resources toward shaping a better future.

It is clear - and we shamefully recognize - that MMEA as an organization has not done enough to support BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) music educators and students. Discussions about how to address this will be foremost in our work as a board going forward. To begin to confront this deficiency we commit to the following steps in the days and weeks to come:

- Provide guidance and resources for teachers to assist them in revamping their Elementary curricula in order to root out and eliminate all of the folk songs that are coded with racist themes and phrases.
- Continue meaningful work to elevate music that falls outside the “traditional” band, orchestra, choir, and jazz ensemble genres.
- Provide a set of best practices for programming works from diverse composers for students in all performing ensembles.

We are also committed to working with our All-State Task Group to ensure equity and racial justice in the All-State program next year. Initial steps will include (but are not limited to):

- Purposeful inclusion of concert literature composed by people of color and reflecting diverse cultures.
- Take steps to ensure that more students of color and from diverse backgrounds are selected for the All-State program.
- Increase All-State scholarship resources for students to allow equitable access to participation in the All-State program.

Against the backdrop of the global pandemic, all educators have struggled to meet students' needs through distance learning and keep connected with them. Teachers have especially struggled to process how to best serve students in talking about race and racist actions by those in all of our communities. We know that there is no single way to end racism, but as educators we have the opportunity to enter into these conversations and guide students who are struggling and need direction. MMEA is committed to supporting teachers and students in these conversations. In the coming days and weeks we will be providing resources to help you to address how to start talking about race, racist behaviors, and how black lives matter within music education.

Here are some thoughts about how to begin to have these sorts of discussions with your students:

- Create guidelines for conversations that set in place a safe and respectful space for discussion.
- Help students realize that there will be discomfort and uncertainty as issues of racism are



discussed.

- Discuss with students that a history of racism has existed throughout our nation's history and continues to pervade the structures of our society.
- Encourage students to discuss what they feel about discrimination, race, and police brutality and how it has affected them. Listen and give students a space to share their thoughts and feelings.
- Acknowledge that learning about racism is a process and that hard discussions are necessary to bring about change.
- Help students to discover what it means and looks like to act as an ally for people of color and learn ways to engage in ally behavior.

As music educators, what can you do right now and what actions can you take before classes begin again in the fall?

1. Become immediately involved in supporting the [black arts community](#) in Minnesota. Familiarize yourself with BIPOC arts organizations in our state as well as support organizations such as Springboard for the Arts <https://springboardforthearts.org/> and support them with your patronage and financial contributions.
2. Engage your school administrators in conversations about how to be an anti-racist school for next fall:
 - How can we rethink questions we ask during professional development, team collaboration, and building-wide professional development so that they encourage professionals to look through an equity lens?
 - In what ways does a dominantly white culture impact our schools and our classrooms? In what ways is it forced and enforced on students?
 - How can we celebrate culture, heritage and race in our schools?
3. Investigate personal and professional development resources to educate ourselves about how to provide our students an anti-racist experience in our music classrooms next fall. Here is a beginning list:
 - <https://decolonizingthemusicroom.com/>
 - <https://www.tolerance.org/>
 - <http://www.findingmusicresources.com/anti-racist-pedagogy.html>
 - https://www.ted.com/talks/liz_kleinrock_how_to_teach_kids_to_talk_about_taboo_topics/transcript?language=en

MMEA remains committed to our mission of providing high quality music education for every student. We will continue to provide resources and support to help our members address and confront all forms of discrimination and racism as Minnesota music educators. We believe that change is possible. Music can unite. Music can empower. Music can heal.